

## Rudy's improbable run

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## Rudy's Improbable Run

John C. Hulsman

*Der ehemalige New Yorker Bürgermeister Rudy Giuliani ist der ungewöhnlichste Präsidentschaftskandidat in einem insgesamt schwachen republikanischen Bewerberfeld. Zwar verfügt er als Reformers einer schwer regierbaren Stadt und als Krisenmanager nach den Anschlägen vom 11. September 2001 über exzellente politische Führungserfahrung. Andererseits liegt er in allen gesellschaftspolitischen Fragen (Waffenrecht, Abtreibung, Rechte von Homosexuellen) quer zu seiner eigenen Partei. Hinzu kommt, dass Giuliani sich in einem kriegsmüden Land als „Falke“ mit einem harten Kurs in der Irak- und der Iran-Frage profiliert. Im Vorwahlkampf folgt Giuliani einer bisher unerprobten Strategie: Statt sich auf die traditionell wichtigen früh abstimmenden Staaten zu konzentrieren, konzentriert er sich u.a. auf Florida, Illinois und Kalifornien, wo viele Stimmen zu holen sind. In dem gerafften und vorgezogenen Vorwahlkampf erscheint der Erfolg dieser Strategie zwar nicht unmöglich, aber sie ist doch riskant. Allen republikanischen Anwärtern aber ist ein Problem gemein: Die starke Stellung von Hillary Clinton auf der demokratischen Seite bleibt in allen Umfragen ungebrochen.*

### Someone Has To Win

The current Republican presidential field is so weak that it has become a parlor game for insiders to point out the candidates' glaring flaws. Senator John McCain of Arizona has horribly mismanaged his campaign, and is totally at odds with the Republican base over immigration and with the country over Iraq. Former Senator Fred Thompson of Tennessee is sleepwalking through the primary season, running at something less than half-speed; the country must have a chief executive who is not constantly in need of a nap. Former Governor Mitt Romney of Massachusetts has 'evolved' from the centrist, moderate leader of the ultimate Democratic state into a social conservative, changing his positions on abortion, gun rights, and rights for gays; no one on the right is fooled by this opportunism. And yet, throwing in Mayor Giuliani of New

York, the pro-abortion rights, pro-gay rights, pro-gun control candidate from the state the Republican Party loves to hate, one of these guys has to win, in spite of all this conventional wisdom.

### Some Real Strengths

Currently, according to all national polls, Giuliani remains the man to beat, as he is comfortable ahead of Fred Thompson by over ten points. Unlike others in the race, such as Thompson and McCain, Giuliani has genuine executive experience, successfully running one of the most unmanageable cities in the world. While he was Mayor, crime was halved in New York. His espousal of the 'broken window syndrome,' that tolerating petty crime encouraged more serious malfeasance, led to a revolution in city policing across the country.

Likewise, the Mayor cut taxes, a point he stresses in his campaign speeches (he doesn't mention that under his tenure city debt rose as well, but that is a debating point for Senator Clinton to pick up on). Even without 9/11, Giuliani is generally credited with turning New York around.

But it is his leadership during the tragedy of 9/11 that he is running on; it is his claim to worldwide fame and his great edge among Republicans when talk turns to fighting terrorism. For only Giuliani has hands-on experience here. Yes, he made mistakes leading up to the defining event of the post-Cold War era—establishing the city's terrorist command center in the twin towers after they had been threatened in the 1990s and the dearth of communications between the various rescue services are points of real discussion—, but his leadership on that terrible day sticks in the mind of all Americans as a point of light amid the blackness. Democratic operatives may jeer that the Mayor has a noun, verb, and 9/11 in every sentence, but that is the calling card that brought him to the dance. With the Republican base valuing national security issues above all else, it would be madness not to stress 9/11.

Giuliani also has an innovative election strategy, wholly at odds with contemporary American electoral experience. The conventional view is that a candidate has to win either Iowa, New Hampshire, or South Carolina, riding the momentum and free favorable press into victories in the later, more populous states. With the primary season so radically changed (see the October Washington Briefing) and so many of the larger states such as Florida, California, and Illinois having contests so soon after the first three, Giuliani, while campaigning everywhere, has focused on Florida as his fire wall. Feeling that the new primary schedule has turned this conventional wisdom on its head, as there will be a relatively limited bounce from the early states, the Mayor is solidly leading in these big three states, which are set to vote February 5th. He may well be right.

## Formidable Weaknesses

And yet. Giuliani remains wholly out of tune with the right-wing conservative, southern wing of his party, which has dominated the more libertarian, western pole of the GOP. After some initial waffling, he remains resolutely pro-gun control, pro-abortion rights, and pro-gay rights, enraging single-issue voters on the right of the party. Worse for him, at present many Republicans seem unaware of this. According to a recent Gallup poll, only 37 percent of Republicans surveyed knew he was pro-choice, and only 18 percent knew he favored civil unions for gays. Certainly the other Republican candidates' will be gleefully pointing this out as the campaign progresses.

The Mayor forthrightly stresses that while he has disagreements with the base over social issues, he is with them on taxes and national security; he then throws in what he hopes to be the clincher—that he and he alone can beat Hillary Clinton, the likely Democratic nominee. Giuliani feels he can run competitive races in vital states such as New York and California in a general election in a way no other Republican can, at a minimum forcing Democrats to spend time and money defending electoral votes that would otherwise be theirs by default. So far the facts simply do not back this interpretation up; the election up to now has been a referendum on Senator Clinton. As Rasmussen Reports suggests, she receives the same portion of the vote, around 48 percent, whichever Republican she runs against. If the thrice-married mayor, with social positions so at odds with the right wing of the party cannot do better against Hillary, why should skeptical Republicans vote for him?

The tenor of the country is flowing against Giuliani as well. He has been among the most hawkish Republicans against allowing Iran to build a nuclear weapon, even refusing to preclude the use of tactical nuclear weapons against Iran's facilities. Yet after the debacle of Iraq, American public opinion is dovish-three-

quarter's of those polled think Iran is building a bomb, yet two-third's are against American military action to stop this. Iran has been the signature dividing foreign policy issue of the campaign, with Democrats stressing diplomacy and Republicans stressing the need to leave military options on the table. In the general election, this could prove to be the fatal undoing of the Giuliani campaign.

### A Year Is A Long Time In Politics

When asked by President Kennedy what he feared most, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan of Great Britain dryly replied, 'Events, dear boy, events.' With so much time to go until November 2008, the real world will not stay isolated from the American political campaign. God forbid, another terrorist attack could once again change the national mood dramatically. But

as of this writing, the very weakness of the Republican field has sustained the Giuliani campaign, as there has been no unified right-wing alternative to the Mayor. While there is little doubting Giuliani's savvy, drive, or toughness, the political advantage has to rest with the Democrats.



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